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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY WINDHOEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0381
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 WINDHOEK 000081

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: SENV TSPL TBIO EAGR ECON AMGT APER EPA WA

SUBJECT: Embassy Science Fellows Program 2009: Namibia

REF: STATE 10843

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Summary
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¶1. (U) U.S. Embassy Windhoek is pleased to provide our request for a 2009 Embassy Science Fellow. This proposal is keyed to reftel.

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Section 1:
Subject of Proposal and General Information
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¶2. (U) Proposal Topic: Disease Surveillance for Aquatic Organisms in Namibia

The Embassy Science Fellow will provide guidance in setting up disease surveillance programs for mariculture and freshwater aquaculture farms. The fellow will be expected to advise responsible government ministries on the most appropriate aquatic disease-surveillance program for Namibia, taking into consideration resource constraints (staffing, equipment and funding). The fellow will also be expected assist in developing small pilot surveillance programs on one or more farms.

¶3. (U) Name of Host Institution(s):

Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR)
Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI)
National Standards Institute (NSI) - An agency under the MTI
Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET)
Ministry of Health and Social Services (MHSS)
Ministry of Agriculture, Water, and Forestry (MAWF)

The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR) will be the primary sponsoring institution. The fellow will also have close collaboration with other ministries. The MFMR is responsible aquatic disease surveillance reporting to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). National animal health reporting (including aquatic) is the responsibility of the Veterinary Department of the Ministry of Agriculture Water and Forestry. Post has worked closely with MFMR and other government officials to craft this proposal. All parties have expressed a strong interest to work with and learn from an Embassy Science Fellow. MFMR officials understand that proper access to government and other officials will be critical to the successful completion of the fellowship.

¶4. (U) Preferred Time Frame and Length of Fellowship: The best times to carry out this work would be September to November 2009, or February to April 2010. December and January in Namibia are not good times to work in Namibia as most government employees take prolonged vacations during the so called "Festive" and school summer vacation season. Due to the scope of work, this fellow may need to commit to the maximum three month period.

¶5. (U) Skills that Successful Fellows Should Possess: The Fellow is expected to be scientifically qualified in disciplines relating to aquatic disease diagnostics and surveillance. The MFMR expects someone with at least six years working experience in the shellfish

disease diagnostics field, as well as adequate knowledge on shellfish diseases and monitoring thereof. The fellow should have experience in the diagnosis of oyster and abalone diseases, and specifically OIE-listed diseases. In the freshwater sector work will primarily target disease surveillance of tilapia and catfish. The fellow should be able to provide guidelines for disease-scoping in freshwater fish and be competent in the diagnosis of Epizootic Ulcerative Syndrome (EUS), with a generalized knowledge of freshwater fish disease. The Fellow should be competent in both histological and polymerase chain reaction (PCR)-based techniques, including amplified restriction fragment polymorphism (AFLP), in order to assist in training of staff in these techniques.

¶6. (U) Security Clearance: No security clearance is required to participate in this activity.

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Section 2: Proposal Description
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¶7. (U) Namibia has for several years been developing a commercial mariculture industry. Faced with a 37 percent unemployment rate, the government is keen to see mariculture expand further as it is a labor-intensive industry. Despite a devastating (but rare) red tide event that occurred in 2008, Namibian waters, fed by the nutrient-rich Benguela current, are largely free of pollutants that contaminate the waters in other locations. This makes Namibia an ideal location for growing oysters, abalone, and other mollusks. Namibian oysters grow to "market size" in half the time of other oyster-growing regions and they are known for their high quality and superb taste. The bulk of current mariculture production goes to export markets in South Africa and Asia. Experts argue that there

would be high demand for Namibian oysters in Europe and the United States, if Namibia was permitted to export to those markets.

¶8. (U) Given appropriate food safety measures Namibia's mariculture industry could easily penetrate the high-value markets in Europe and the United States. Disease surveillance has become an increasingly urgent issue for Namibian mariculture farmers. Shellfish outbreaks are becoming more common around the world, crippling shellfish industries (e.g. the recent Herpes virus outbreak in the French oyster industry). Namibia imports shellfish spat from various places in the world - a dangerous practice without in-house monitoring and testing capabilities. Diseased spat imports could act as a disease vector for both native and farmed species of mollusks along the Namibian coast as well as in neighboring countries (Angola and South Africa).

¶9. (U) Namibian Government (GRN) has been actively promoting the development of inland freshwater fish farms to boost economic growth and to diversify and fortify the diet of average of Namibians (which tends to be dominated by maize and meat products). Disease outbreaks at inland fisheries could devastate the limited gains that government and private partners have made in developing freshwater fish farms.

¶10. (U) The MFMR currently has a small microbiological laboratory at its Swakopmund Institute (NatMIRC) for marine research and the Kamutjonga Inland Fisheries Institute (KIFI) for freshwater research. The MFMR wishes to develop NatMIRC into a disease testing and surveillance facility. The fellow will be expected to help establish a basic diagnostic competence in the laboratories at both NatMIRC and Kamutjonga with regard to diagnosis of disease in the species presently being farmed. Ideally the Embassy Science Fellow would assist in training staff, students, and/or industry personnel in the running of a surveillance program. The fellow would also train the aforementioned in proper laboratory procedures.

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Section 3: Administrative Support
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¶11. (U) Post acknowledges that it must provide the Embassy Science Fellow with housing, office support, in-country travel arrangements,

and other logistical support. The fellow will have to spend time in the capital Windhoek, on the coast in Swakopmund, and at the Kamutjonga Inland Fisheries Institute (KIFI) in the Kavango region. Available Embassy housing will be used while the fellow is in Windhoek. If no Embassy housing is available in Windhoek, we will provide housing at well established short-term lodging facilities. We will provide the same in Swakopmund and Kamutjonga. The MFMR will provide shared office space in both Swakopmund and Kamutjonga, while the Embassy can provide space while the fellow is in Windhoek. The Embassy will provide a cell phone and laptop computer. The laptop will be configured for wired and wireless (3G) internet access so the fellow will be able to use his/her computer at any of the three locations. Namibia has good infrastructure as compared to other Sub-Saharan African countries. Internal travel between worksites should be relatively easy as Namibia has a good road network. Communication and access electronic information is generally not a major problem as the telecommunications network is fairly modern and reaches all population centers.

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Section 4: RSO Concurrence
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¶12. (U) Windhoek is not a post in "unaccompanied tour status". RSO has cleared on this proposal. RSO will provide the Embassy Science Fellow a safety and security briefing upon arrival in Namibia.

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Section 5: Contact Information
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¶13. (U) The State Department Point of Contact (POC) is Embassy Economic and Commercial Officer Frank DeParis. He can be reached by phone at: +264 61 295-8549, fax at: +264 61 295 -8603, or email at deparisf@state.gov.

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